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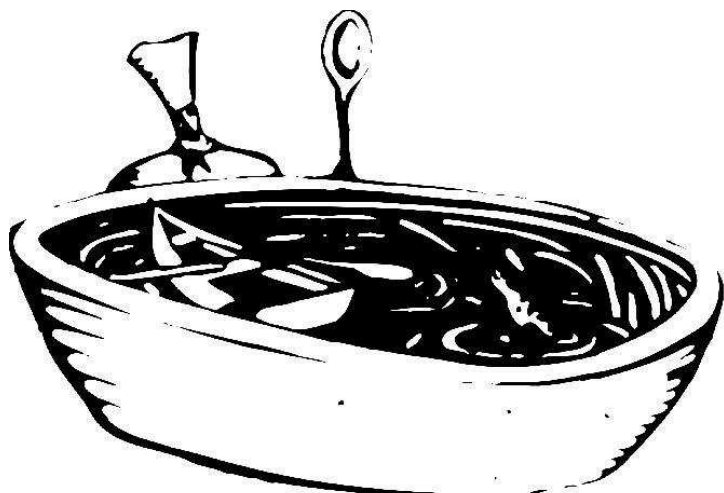
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CATCHING FIRE

A Corvallis conference examines the cosmic dance of nature, reverence and action.

BY KATE STORM

On the other end of the line Kathleen Dean Moore spoke poignantly, each word held in a space of its own, "To honor the earth every day I would start with attentiveness. With walking out the front door every morning and noticing the natural world—smelling it, seeing it, listening to the morning. I would end the same way."

Moore directs the Spring Creek Project

N. Scott Momaday opens the conference on Thursday, Oct. 28. "I think he'll lift the hair on the back of our necks," Moore said, chuckling. "I hope that he teaches us to see. I hope he tells us straight about the obligation we have to honor the earth."

Friday evening features the world premier of OSU professor of music Michael Coolen's composition "In the Beginning" performed by the OSU Chamber Choir and the Corvallis-OSU Chamber Orchestra. The con-

A sense of wonder closes the distance between what the world is and what it ought to be.

- Kathleen Dean Moore

for ideas, nature and the written word (SCP) at Oregon State University. SCP hosts conferences for scientists, visual artists, writers and philosophers. "We bring people together that might never have found each other so that they may re-imagine our relationship with nature," said SCP instructor Charles Goodrich.

After five years of "collaboration between left and right brain people, between the creative minded and the analytically minded," Goodrich said, "we began to suspect that part of the reason people get so excited about discussing (nature) with each other is that they all experience awe at the natural world. For some of us, that wonderment comes from a mountain vista. For others, it comes from the DNA in lichen strands."

"It got us thinking about the human response to the natural world and about our relation to that response," Goodrich said. It was out of that experience that the idea for the conference, **Nature and the Sacred: A Fierce Green Fire**, was conceived. The conference, held Oct. 28-30 at OSU, includes a symphony concert, workshops, discussion circles and poetry readings examining the relationship between human beings, nature, spirit and action.

Keynote speakers are eco-philosopher and activist Joanna Macy Kiowa, author N. Scott Momaday, and Chet Raymo, professor emeritus of physics and astronomy at Stonehill College in Massachusetts. "We will hear people speaking from their hearts and their experience about what they've learned living with the sacred," said Moore, who is also presenting. "We don't want to just sit around talking ideas, or talking about what's happened in the past. We want to talk about living a life of gratitude, a life of servitude to our whole bio-cultural community, this rich complex of people and places."

cert includes images from the Hubble Space telescope and Raymo reading from his work. "I celebrate nature through words," Raymo said. The contrast of his stark voice to Moore's lyrical one suggests the convergence of scientific and artistic impulses from which SCP draws its energy.

The final day is what Moore calls "a kind of town hall meeting" to discuss possible responses to the question, "If nature is sacred, how then shall we live?" There will be activist tables, project education, several discussion rooms, African drumming, poetry readings, a labyrinth and a meditation space.

Moore is a professor of philosophy at OSU and author of several books including *The Pine Island Paradox*. Central to her work is a philosophical examination of the boundaries around the sacred and profane. "I think our lives are made lonelier, more reckless, by the delusion that we live in a mundane world of simple commodities," she said. "This symposium is designed to say, 'Look, just look.' When people look they start to really see and that's an open door into wonder. A sense of wonder closes the distance between what the world is and what it ought to be."

"When we recognize that the world is unique, beautiful and extraordinary," Moore continued, "we learn to respond with respect, celebration, joy and caring." Her words echo Joanna Macy's sentiment that, "Just as lovers seek for union, we are apt, when we fall in love with our world, to fall into oneness with it as well."

Nature and the Sacred: A Fierce Green Fire is being held October 28 to 30 at OSU. Registration forms and information are available at www.oregonstate.edu/cia/natureand-sacred. Scholarships are also available. Moore is facilitating a follow-up discussion in Eugene at 7 pm, November 10 at Mother Kali's Books.